

NEW
SERIES

NOVEMBER

VOL.
21

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round
a
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

PART 120

PRICE
ELEVENPENCE.

1878

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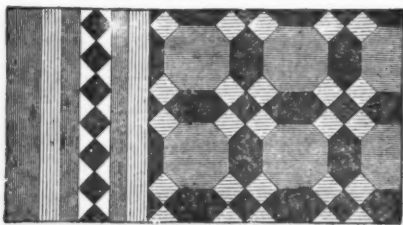
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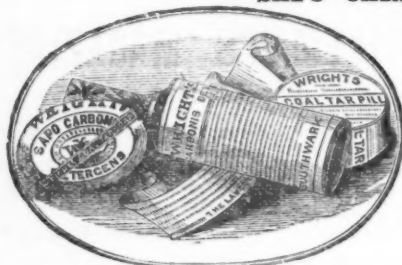
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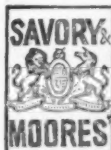
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VIXEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c. &c.

CHAPTER VI. RORIE HAS PLANS OF HIS OWN.

RODERICK VAWDREY'S ideas of what was due to a young man who attains his majority were in no wise satisfied by his birthday dinner-party. It had been pleasant enough in its way, but far too much after the pattern of all other dinner-parties to please a young man who hated all common and hackneyed things, and all the beaten tracks of life—or who, at any rate, fancied he did, which comes to nearly the same thing.

"Mother," he began at breakfast next morning, in his loud cheery voice, "we must have something for the small tenants, and shopkeepers, and cottagers."

"What do you mean, Roderick?"

"Some kind of entertainment to celebrate my majority. The people will expect it. Last night polished off the swells very nicely. The whole thing did you credit, mother."

"Thank you," said Lady Jane, with a slight contraction of her thin lips.

This October morning, so pleasant for Rorie, was rather a bitter day for his mother. She had been reigning sovereign at Briarwood hitherto; henceforth she could only live there on sufferance. The house was Rorie's. Even the orchid-houses were his. He might take her to task, if he pleased, for having spent so much money on glass.

"But I must have my humble friends round me," continued Rorie. "The young people, too—the boys and girls. I'll tell you what, mother. We must have a meet. The hounds have never met here since my

grandfather's time—fifty years ago. The duke's stud-groom was telling me about it last year. He's a Hampshire man, you know, born and bred in the Forest. We'll have a meet and a hunting breakfast; and it shall be open house for everyone—high and low, rich and poor, gentle and simple. Don't be frightened, mother," interjected Rorie, seeing Lady Jane's look of horror; "we won't do any mischief. Your gardens shall be respected."

"They are your gardens now, Roderick. You are sole master here, and can do what you please."

"My dear mother, how can you talk like that? Do you suppose I shall ever forget who made the place what it is? The gardens have been your pet hobby, and they shall be your gardens to the end of time."

"That is very generous of you, my dear Roderick; but you are promising too much. When you marry, your wife will be mistress of Briarwood, and it will be necessary for me to find a new home."

"I am in no hurry to get married. It will be half-a-dozen years before I shall even think of anything so desperate."

"I hope not, Roderick. With your position and your responsibilities you ought to marry young. Marriage—a suitable marriage, that is to say—would give you an incentive to earnestness and ambition. I want to see you follow in your father's footsteps; I want you to make a name, by-and-by."

"I'm afraid it will be a distant by-and-by," said Rorie, with a yawn. "I don't feel at all drawn towards the senate. I love the country, my dogs, my horses, the free fresh air, the stir and movement of life, too well to pen myself up in a study

and pore over blue books, or to waste the summer evenings listening to the member for Little Peddlington laying down the law about combination drainage or local government. I'm afraid it isn't in me, mother, and that you'll be disappointed if you set your heart upon my making a figure as a senator."

"I should like to see you worthy of your father's name," Lady Jane said, with a regretful sigh.

"Providence hasn't made me in the same pattern," answered Rorie. "Look at my grandfather's portrait over the side-board, in pink and mahogany tops. What a glorious old fellow he must have been! You should hear how the old people talk of him. I think I inherit his tastes, instead of my father's. Perhaps, if I have a son, he will be a heaven-born statesman, and you may have your ambition gratified by a grandson. And now about the hunting breakfast. Would this day week suit you?"

"This is your house, Roderick. It is for you to give your orders."

"Bosh," exclaimed the son, impatiently.

"Don't I tell you that you are mistress here, and will be mistress——"

"My dear Roderick, let us look things straight in the face," said Lady Jane. "If I were sole mistress here there would be no hunting breakfast. It is just the very last kind of entertainment I should ever dream of giving. I am not complaining, mind. It is natural enough for you to like that kind of thing; and, as master of this house, it is your right to invite whomsoever you please. I am quite happy that it should be so, but let there be no more talk about my being mistress of this house. That is too absurd."

Rorie felt all his most generous impulses turned to a sense of constraint and bitterness. He could say no more.

"Will you give me a list of the people you would like to be asked," said his mother, after rather an uncomfortable silence.

"I'll go and talk it over with the duke," answered Rorie. "He'll enter into the spirit of the thing."

Rorie found the duke going the round of his loose boxes, and uncle and nephew spent an hour together pleasantly, overhauling the fine stud of hunters which the duke kept at Ashbourne, and going round the paddocks to look at the brood mares and their foals; these latter being eccentric little animals, all head and legs, which nestled close to the mother's side for a minute, and then took fright at their own

tails and shot off across the field, like a skyrocket travelling horizontally, or suddenly stood up on end, and executed a wild waltz in mid air.

The duke and Roderick decided which among these leggy little beasts had the elements of future excellence; and after an hour's perambulation of the paddocks, went to the house, where they found the duchess and Lady Mabel in the morning room; the duchess busy making scarlet cloth cloaks for her school children, Lady Mabel reading a German critic on Shakespeare.

Here the hunt breakfast was fully discussed. Everybody was to be asked. The duchess put in a plea for her school children. It would be such a treat for the little things to see the meet, and their red cloaks and hoods would look so pretty on the lawn.

"Let them come, by all means," said Roderick; "your school—half-a-dozen schools. I'll have three or four tents rigged up for refreshments. There shall be plenty to eat and drink for everybody. And now I'm off to the Tempests', to arrange about the hounds. The squire will be pleased, I know."

"Of course," said Lady Mabel, "and the squire's daughter."

"Dear little thing," exclaimed Rorie, with an elder brother's tenderness; "she'll be as pleased as Punch. You'll hunt, of course, Mabel?"

"I don't know. I don't shine in the field, as Miss Tempest does."

"Oh, but you must come, Mab. The duke will find you a safe mount."

"She has a hunter I bred on purpose for her," said the duke; "but she'll never be such a horsewoman as her mother."

"She looks lovely on Mazeppa," said Rorie; "and she must come to my hunting breakfast."

"Of course, Rorie, if you wish I shall come."

Rorie stayed to luncheon, and then went back to Briarwood to mount his horse and ride to the Abbey House.

The afternoon was drawing in when Rorie rode up to the old Tudor porch—a soft, sunless, gray afternoon. The door stood open, and he saw the glow of the logs on the wide hearth, and the squire's stalwart figure sitting in the great arm-chair, leaning forward with a newspaper across his knee, and Vixen on a stool at his feet, the dogs grouped about them.

"Shall I send my horse round to the stables, squire?" asked Rorie.

"Do, my lad," answered Mr. Tempest, ringing the bell, at which summons a man appeared, and took charge of Roderick's tall chestnut.

"Been hunting to-day, squire?" asked Rorie, when he had shaken hands with Mr. Tempest and his daughter, and seated himself on the opposite side of the hearth.

"No," answered the squire, in a voice that had a duller sound than usual. "We had the hounds out this morning, at Hilberry Green, and there was a good muster, Jack Parry says; but I felt out of sorts, and neither Vixen nor I went. It was a loss for Vixen, poor little girl."

"It was a grief to see you ill, papa," said Violet, nestling closer to him.

She had hardly taken any notice of Roderick to-day, shaking hands with him in an absent-minded way, evidently full of anxiety about her father. She was very pale, and looked older and more womanly than when he saw her last, Roderick thought.

"I'm not ill, my dear," said the squire, "only a little muddled and queer in my head; been riding too hard lately, perhaps. I don't get lighter, you know, Rorie, and a quick run shakes me more than it used. Old Martin, our family doctor, has been against my hunting for a long time; but I should like to know what kind of life men of my age would lead if they listened to the doctors? They wouldn't let us have a decent dinner."

"I'm so sorry," said Rorie; "I came to ask you a favour, and now I feel as if I hardly ought to say anything about it."

And then Roderick proceeded to tell the squire his views about a meet at Briarwood, and a hunting breakfast for rich and poor.

"It shall be done, my boy," answered the squire heartily. "It's just the sort of thing you ought to do to make yourself popular. Lady Jane is a charming woman, you know, thoroughbred to the fingernails; but she has kept herself a little too much to herself. There are people old enough to remember what Briarwood was in your grandfather's time. This day week, you say. I'll arrange everything. We'll have such a gathering as hasn't been seen for the last twenty years."

"Vixen must come with you," said Rorie.

"Of course."

"If papa is well and strong enough to hunt."

"My love, there is nothing amiss with

me—nothing that need trouble me this day week. A man may have a headache, mayn't he, child, without people making any fuss about it?"

"I should like you to see Dr. Martin, papa. Don't you think he ought to see the doctor, Rorie? It's not natural for him to be ill."

"I'm not going to be put upon half rations, Vixen. Martin would starve me, that's his only idea of medical treatment. Yes, Vixen shall come, Rorie."

CHAPTER VII. VIXEN'S FIRST SORROW.

THE morning of the Briarwood Meet dawned fairly. Roderick watched the first lifting of the darkness from his bedroom window, and rejoiced in the promise of a fine day. The heavens, which had been so unpropitious upon his birthday, seemed to promise better things to-day. He did not desire the traditional hunting morning—a southerly wind and a cloudy sky. He cared very little about the scent lying well, or the actual result of the day's sport. He wanted rather to see the kind familiar faces round him; the autumn sunshine lighting up all the glow and colour of the picture, the red-coats, the rich bay and brown of the horses, the verdant background of lawn and shrubberies. Two huge marquees had been erected for the commonalty; one for the school-children, the other for the villagers. There were long tables in the billiard-room for the farming class, and for the quality there was the horseshoe table in the dining-room, as at Roderick's birthday dinner. But on this occasion the table was decorated only with hardy ferns and flowers. The orchids were not allowed to appear.

Roderick noticed the omission.

"Why, where are the thing-um-tites, mother?" he asked, with some surprise; "the pitcher-plants, and tropical what's-its-names?"

"I did not think there was any occasion to have them brought out of the houses, Roderick," Lady Jane answered quietly; "there is always a risk of their being killed, or some of your sporting friends might be picking my prize blossoms to put in their button-holes. Men who give their minds to horses would hardly appreciate orchids."

"All right, mother. As long as there is plenty to eat, I don't suppose it much matters," answered Rorie.

He had certainly no cause for complaint upon this score. Briarwood had been amply provisioned for an unlimited

hospitality. The red coats, and green coats, and blue coats, and brown coats, came in and out, slashed away at boar's head, and truffled turkey, sent champagne corks flying, and added more dead men to the formidable corps of tall hock bottles, dressed in uniform brown, which the astonished butler ranged rank and file in a lobby outside the dining-room. He had never seen this kind of thing at Briarwood since he had kept the keys of the cellars; and he looked upon this promiscuous hospitality with a disapproving eye.

The duke supported his nephew admirably, and was hail-fellow-well-met with everybody. He had always been popular at Ashbourne. It was his own place, his particular selection, bought with his own money, improved under his own eye, and he liked it better than any of his hereditary seats.

"If I had only had a son like you, Rorie," he said, as he stood beside the young man, on the gravel sweep before the hall-door, welcoming the new comers, "I should have been a happy man. Well, I suppose I must be satisfied with a grandson, but it's a hard thing that the title and estates are to go to that scamp of a cousin of mine."

Roderick, on this particular morning, was a nephew whom any uncle might be proud to own. His red coat and buckskins became him; so did his position as host and master at Briarwood. His tall erect figure showed to advantage amidst the crowd. His smile lit up the dark sunburnt face like sunshine. He had a kind word, a friendly hand-clasp for everybody—even for gaffers and goodies who had hobbled from their village shanties to see the sport, and to get their share of told sirloin and old October. He took the feeble old creatures into the tent, and saw that they got a place at the board.

Squire Tempest and his daughter were among the later arrivals. The meet was to be at one, and they only rode into the grounds at half-past twelve, when everybody else had breakfasted. Mrs. Tempest had not come. The entertainment was much too early for a lady who never left her rooms till after noon.

Vixen looked lovely in her smart little habit. It was not the Lincoln green with the brass buttons, which Lady Mabel had laughed at a year ago. To-day Miss Tempest wore a dark brown habit, moulded to the full erect figure, with a narrow rim of white at the throat, a little felt hat of

the same dark brown, with a brown feather, long white gauntlets, and a whip with an ivory handle.

The golden bay's shining coat matched Violet's shining hair. It was the prettiest picture in the world, the little rider in dark brown on the bright bay horse, the daintily-quilted saddle, the gauntleted hands playing so lightly with the horse's velvet mouth—horse and rider devotedly attached to each other.

"How do you like him?" asked Vixen, directly she and Rorie had shaken hands. "Isn't he absolutely lovely?"

"Absolutely lovely," said Rorie, patting the horse's shoulder and looking at the rider.

"Papa gave him to me on my last birthday. I was to have ridden Titmouse another year; but I got the brush one day after a hard run, when almost everybody else was left behind, and papa said I should have a horse. Poor Titmouse is put into a basket-chaise. Isn't it sad for him?"

"Awfully humiliating."

Lady Mabel was close by on her chestnut thoroughbred, severely costumed in darkest blue and chimney-pot hat.

"I don't think you've ever met my cousin?" said Rorie. "Mabel, this is Miss Tempest, whom you've heard me talk about. Miss Tempest, Lady Mabel Ashbourne."

Violet Tempest gave a startled look, and blushed crimson. Then the two girls bowed and smiled: a constrained smile on Vixen's part, a prim and chilly smile from Lady Mabel.

"I want you two to be awful good friends," said Rorie; "and when you come out, Vixen, Lady Mabel will take you under her wing. She knows everybody, and the right thing to be done on every occasion."

Vixen turned from red to pale, and said nothing. Lady Mabel looked at the distant blue line of the Wight, and murmured that she would be happy to be of use to Miss Tempest if ever they met in London. Rorie felt, somehow, that it was not encouraging. Vixen stole a glance at her rival. Yes, she was very pretty—a delicate patrician beauty that Vixen had never seen before. No wonder Rorie was in love with her. Where else could he have seen anything so exquisite? It was the most natural thing in the world that these cousins should be fond of each other, and engaged to be married. Vixen wondered that the thing had never occurred to her as inevitable—that it should have come upon her as a blow at the last.

"I think Rorie ought to have told me," she said to herself. "He is like my brother; and a brother would not hide his love affairs from his sister. It was rather mean of Rorie."

The business of the day began presently. Neither Vixen nor the squire dismounted. They had breakfasted at home; and Vixen, who did not care much for Lady Jane Vawdrey, was glad to escape with no further communication than a smile and a bow. At a quarter-past one they were all riding away towards the forest, and presently the serious business began.

Vixen and her father were riding side by side.

"How pale you look, papa. Is your head bad again to-day?"

"Yes, my dear. I'm afraid I've started a chronic headache. But the fresh air will blow it away presently, I daresay. You're not looking over well yourself, Vixen. What have you done with your roses?"

"I—I—don't care much about hunting to-day, papa," said Violet, sudden tears rushing into her eyes. "Shall we go home together? You're not well, and I'm not enjoying myself. Nobody wants us, either; so why should we stay?"

Rorie was a little way behind them, taking care of Lady Mabel, whose slim-legged chestnut went through as many manœuvres as if he had been doing the business in a circus, and got over the ground very slowly.

"Nonsense, child! Go back! I should think not! We shall find down in Dingley Bottom, I daresay, and get a capital run across the hills to Beaulieu."

They found just as the squire had anticipated, and after that there was a hard run for the next hour and a quarter. Roderick was at the heel of the hunt all the time, opening gates, and keeping his cousin out of bogs and dangers of all kinds. They killed at last on a wild bit of common near Beaulieu, and there were only a few in at the death, amongst them Vixen on her fast young bay, flushed with excitement and triumph by this time, and forgetting all her troubles in the delight of winning one of the pads. Mrs. Millington, the famous huntress from the shires, was there to claim the brush.

"How tired you look, papa," said Vixen, as they rode quietly homewards.

"A little done up, my dear, but a good dinner will set me all right again. It was a capital run, and your horse behaved

beautifully. I don't think I made a bad choice for you. Rorie and his cousin were miles behind, I daresay. Pretty girl, and sits her horse like a picture—but she can't ride. We shall meet them going home, perhaps."

A mile or two farther on they met Roderick alone. His cousin had gone home with her father.

"It was rather a bore losing the run," he said, as he turned his horse's head and rode by Vixen, "but I was obliged to take care of my cousin."

One of the squire's tenants, a seventeen-stone farmer, on a stout grey cob, overtook them presently, and Mr. Tempest rode on by his side, talking agricultural talk about over-fed beasts and cattle shows, the last popular form of cruelty to animals.

Roderick and Violet were alone, riding slowly side by side in the darkening grey, between woods where solitary robins carolled sweetly, or the rare gurgle of the thrush sounded now and then from thickets, beech, and holly.

A faint colour came back to Vixen's cheek. She was very angry with her play-fellow for his want of confidence, for his unfriendly reserve. Yet this was the one happy hour of her day. There had been a flavour of desolateness and abandonment in all the rest.

"I hope you enjoyed the run," said Rorie.

"I don't think you can care much whether we did or didn't," retorted Vixen, shrouding her personality in a vague plural. "If you had cared you would have been with us. Sultan," meaning the tall chestnut, "must have felt cruelly humiliated by being kept so far behind."

"If a man could be in two places at once, half of me, the better half of me, would have been with you, Vixen; but I was bound to take care of my cousin. I had insisted upon her coming."

"Of course," answered Vixen, with a little toss of her head; "it would have been quite wrong if she had been absent."

They rode on in silence for a little while after this. Vixen was longing to say, "Rorie, you have treated me very badly. You ought to have told me you were going to be married." But something restrained her. She patted her horse's neck, listened to the lonely robins, and said not a word. The squire and his tenant were a hundred yards ahead, talking loudly.

Presently they came to a point at which their roads parted, but Rorie still rode on by Vixen.

"Isn't that your nearest way?" asked Vixen, pointing down the cross-road with the ivory handle of her whip.

"I am not going the nearest way. I am going to the Abbey House with you."

"I wouldn't be so rude as to say 'Don't,' but I think poor Sultan must be tired."

"Sultan shall have an off-day to-morrow."

They went into an oak plantation, where a broad opening led from one side of an enclosure to the other. The wood had a mysterious look in the late afternoon, when the shadows were thickening under the tall thin trees. There was an all-pervading ghostly greyness, as in a shadowy underworld. They rode silently over the thick wet carpet of fallen leaves, the horses starting a little now and then at the aspect of a newly-barked trunk lying white across the track. They were silent, having, in sooth, very little to say to each other just at this time. Vixen was nursing her wrathful feelings; Rorie felt that his future was confused and obscure. He ought to do something with his life, perhaps, as his mother had so warmly urged. But his soul was stirred by no ambitious promptings.

They were within two hundred yards of the gate at the end of the enclosure, when Vixen gave a sudden cry:

"Did papa's horse slip?" she asked; "look how he sways in his saddle."

Another instant, and the squire reeled forward, and fell headforemost across his horse's shoulder. The fall was so sudden and so heavy, that the horse fell with him, and then scrambled up on to his feet again affrighted, swung himself round, and rushed past Roderick and Vixen along the splashing track.

Vixen was off her horse in a moment, and had flown to her father's side. He lay like a log, face downwards upon the soddened leaves just inside the gate. The farmer had dismounted and was stooping over him, bridle in hand, with a frightened face.

"Oh, what is it?" cried Violet, frantically. "Did the horse throw him?—Bullfinch, his favourite horse. Is he much hurt? Oh, help me to lift him up—help me—help me!"

Rorie was by her side by this time, kneeling down with her beside the prostrate squire, trying to raise the heavy figure which lay like lead across his arm.

"It wasn't the horse, miss," said the farmer. "I'm afraid it's a seizure."

"A fit!" cried Vixen. "Oh, papa, papa—darling—darling—"

She was sobbing, clinging to him, trembling like a leaf, and turning a white stricken face up towards Roderick.

"Do something to help him—for God's sake—do something," she cried; "you won't let him lie there and die for want of help? Some brandy—something," she gasped, stretching out her trembling hand.

The farmer had anticipated her thought. He had taken his flask from the saddle-pocket, and was kneeling down by the squire. Roderick had lifted the heavy head, and turned the ghastly face to the waning light. He tried to force a little brandy between the livid lips—but vainly.

"For God's sake get her away," he whispered to John Wimble, the farmer. "It's all over with him."

"Come away with me, my dear Miss Tempest," said Wimble, trying to raise Violet from her knees beside the squire. She was gazing into that awful face distractedly—half divining its solemn meaning—yet watching for the kind eyes to open and look at her again. "Come away with me, and we will get a doctor. Mr. Vawdrey will take care of your father."

"You go for the doctor," she answered firmly. "I'll stay with papa. Take my horse, he's faster than yours. Oh, he'll carry you well enough. You don't know how strong he is—go, quick—quick—Doctor Martin, at Lyndhurst—it's a long way, but you must get him. Papa will recover, and be able to ride home, perhaps, before you can get back to us, but go, go."

"You go for the doctor, miss; your horse will carry you fast enough. He'd never carry such a heavy weight as me, and my cob is dead beat. You go, and Mr. Vawdrey will go with you. I'll take care of the squire."

Violet looked from one to the other helplessly.

"I'd rather stay with papa," she said. "You go, Rorie—yes—go, go. I'll stay with papa."

She crouched down beside the prostrate figure on the damp marshy ground, took the heavy head on her lap, and looked up at the two men with a pale set face which indicated a resolve that neither of them was strong enough to overrule. They tried their utmost to persuade her, but in vain. She was fixed as a new Niobe—a stony image of young despair. So Roderick mounted his horse and rode off to Lyndhurst, and honest Jack Wimble tied the other two horses to the gate, and took his stand beside them a few paces from

those two motionless figures on the ground' patiently waiting for the issue of this bitter hour.

It was one of the longest, weariest, saddest hours that ever youth and hope lived through. There was an awful heart-sickening fear in Violet's mind, but she gave it no definite shape. She would not say to herself, My father is dead. The position in which he was lying hampered her arms so that she could not reach out her hand to lay it upon his heart. She bent her face down to his lips.

Oh God! not a flutter stirred upon her soft cheek as she laid it against the open mouth. The lower jaw had fallen in an awful-looking way; but Violet had seen her father look like that sometimes as he slept, with open mouth, before the hall fire. It might be only a long swoon, a suspension of consciousness. Dr. Martin would come presently—oh, how long, how long the time seemed!—and make all things right.

The crescent moon shone silver pale above that grey wood. The barked trunks gleamed white and phantom-like in the gathering dark. Owls began to hoot in the distance, frogs were awaking near at hand, belated rabbits flitted ghost-like across the track. All nature seemed of one grey or shadowy hue—silvery where the moonbeams fell.

The October air was chill and penetrating. There was a dull aching in Violet's limbs from the weight of her burden, but she was hardly conscious of physical pain. It seemed to her that she had been sitting there for hours, waiting for the doctor's help. She thought the night must have nearly worn itself out.

"Doctor Martin could not have been at home," she said, speaking for the first time since Roderick rode away. "Mr. Vawdrey would fetch someone else, surely."

"My dear young lady, he hasn't had time to ride to Lyndhurst yet."

"Not yet," cried Vixen, despairingly, "not yet! And it has been so long. Papa is getting so cold. The chill will be so bad for him."

"Worse for you, miss; I do wish you'd let me take you home."

"And leave papa here—alone—unconscious! How can you be so cruel as to think of such a thing?"

"Dear Miss Tempest, we're not doing him any good, and you may be getting a chill that will be nigh your death. If you would only go home to your mamma,

now—it's hard upon her not to know—she'll be fretting about you, I daresay."

"Don't waste your breath talking to me," cried Vixen, indignantly; "I shall not leave this spot till papa goes with me."

They waited for another quarter of an hour in dismal silence. The horses gnawed the lower branches of the trees, and gave occasional evidence of their impatience. Bullfinch had gone home to his stable no doubt. They were only about a mile-and-a-half from the Abbey House.

Hark! what was that? The splash-splash of horses' hoofs on the soft turf. Another minute and Rorie rode up to the gate with a stranger.

"I was lucky enough to meet this gentleman," he said, "a doctor from Southampton, who was at the hunt to-day. Violet dear, will you let me take you home now, and leave the doctor and Mr. Wimble with your father?"

"No," answered Vixen decisively.

The strange doctor knelt down and looked at his patient. He was a middle-aged man, grave-looking, with iron-grey hair—a man who impressed Vixen with a sense of power and authority. She looked at him silently, with a despairing appealing look that thrilled him, used as he was to such looks. He made his examination quietly, saying not a word, and keeping his face hidden. Then he turned to the two men who were standing close by, watching him anxiously. "You must get some kind of litter to carry him home," he whispered.

And then with gentle firmness, with strong irresistible hands, he separated the living from the dead, lifted Violet from the ground and led her to her horse.

"You must let Mr. Vawdrey take you home, my dear young lady," he said. "You can do nothing here."

"But you—you can do something," sobbed Violet, "you will bring him back to life—you—"

"I will do all that can be done," answered the doctor gently.

His tone told her more than his words. She gave one wild shriek, and threw herself down beside her dead father. A cloud came over the distracted brain, and she lay there senseless. The doctor and Rorie lifted her up and carried her to the gate where her horse was waiting. The doctor forced a little brandy through the locked lips, and between them Rorie and he placed her in the saddle. She had just consciousness enough by this time to hold the reins mechanically, and to sit upright

on her horse; and thus, led by Roderick, she rode slowly back to the home that was never any more to be the same home that she had known and lived in through the joyous sixteen years of her life. All things were to be different to her henceforward. The joy of life was broken short off, like a flower snapped from its stem.

THE CAGOTS.

FROM Auray to Hennebon is a country interesting for many reasons. It is wild enough, with treeless furze-clad moors, and ravines through which streams, clear or peaty as the case may be, force their way over granite boulders. Just like the edge of the Bodmin Downs, about Hanter Gantick and the Devil's Jump; only the Breton moors are on a larger scale, the ravines deeper, the streams less apt to disappear in dry weather. It has historical interest too, which that part of Cornwall wants. The dim old traditions about Arthur and his huntings, and the legends of the wild huntsman and the sad spirit Tregeagle, trying with his pierced limpet-shell—a Cornish urn of the Danaïdes—to empty Dosmery Pool, are naught compared with such a sharply-cut figure as that of Countess Jane of Montfort defending Hennebon, and, even before Sir Walter Manny came to her help, dashing out and setting the French camp in a blaze. Then there is the battle of Auray, in which Oliver of Clisson lost an eye, and Charles of Blois was killed, and Du Guesclin taken. Froissart has stereotyped the scene, the strange confusion into which an army could be thrown in those days of hand-to-hand fighting by one man's prowess. He tells how Sir John Chandos carried all before him, "giving such desperate blows that all shrank from him, for he was of great stature and strength, well-made in all his limbs; so he threw their whole battle into disorder. And truth to tell, when once an army is discomfited, if one falls three follow his example, and to these three ten, and to ten thirty, and if ten run away they are followed by a hundred. Thus it was that day at Auray."

Then, again, there is a more modern and far sadder tale belonging to Auray. There, in the Martyrs' Field the prisoners at Quiberon, who believed when they surrendered, that Hoche had passed his word for their lives, were shot down. Of course, posterity has built an expiatory

chapel, and everyone must feel that the inscription over it: "France in her tears has raised this," tells the truth. No Frenchman, be he red or white, or of whatever political shade, can look on the Martyrs' Field without a thrill of horror.

All this district, too, has its prehistoric remains, far finer and bigger than the Cornish. Carnac is not far off; and cromlechs (dolmens the Bretons call them) abound, some of them with several chambers, some still covered with earth, and thus forming barrows with stone-roofed caves inside. The biggest is at Ker-konnoch, there is another at Plouermel, and another at Kerroch, the namesake—for Cornish and Breton names are often identical—of that Kerrow on the slope of Chapel Cairn Brea, which is in sight both of Land's End and Cape Cornwall. Kerroch, however, was to me chiefly notable for another reason; I found it had been a village of Cagots—those strange outcasts about whom so many conjectures have been made by French antiquaries. In a neighbouring church, St. Caradoc, I think, you may still see the separate holy-water stoup, which they alone were allowed to use, and the mark in the wall beyond which none of them were permitted to approach. When they took the sacrament, it was brought to the place where they knelt close by "the Cagot's door;" when those sprinklings went on which are so common in Roman Catholic worship, the Cagots were sprinkled with the wrong end of the holy-water brush. Even in death they were divided from the rest of the parishioners; and, despite royal edicts to the contrary, this state of isolation lasted till the Revolution; nay, it still lingers on in the French Pyrenees, and still more in Spain, where, under the name of Agotes, the Cagots are still looked on as a degraded race. No girl of Arizcun or Urdax, or indeed of all Upper Navarre, would think of marrying an Agote. I spoke of Kerroch; there, less than two hundred years ago, the Cagots, or Caquots (cacosi in low Latin), were still a people apart; they were ropemakers, not allowed to rent land or to keep cattle, except enough to draw their carts. If one of them did kill a cow or a sheep, no one but his brother Cagots would buy any of it. They were not allowed to walk about barefoot, lest they should defile the ground; and they were bound to wear on their coats, when they went abroad, a patch of red cloth in the shape of a goose's foot, so that everyone

might know who they were. In 1687, two ropemakers of Pluvigner, a big village near Auray, died; the royal edict, passed six years before, had abolished all distinctions between Cagots and other peasants, so the two were taken to the church, and the priest began the service. A crowd soon gathered, however, and broke into the church, seizing the coffins and flinging them out on the high-road. The women were the most furious of all; and, when the seneschal of the royal court of Auray came to the place, with all his posse comitatus and his javelin men and his grand robes, and saw that the bodies were peaceably put into the ground, they stirred up their husbands, and themselves helped to dig open the graves and fling the coffins once more out on the road. Of course, punishment followed; six of the ring-leaders were put in prison, a man and woman had their goods confiscated, and were hanged at Auray. But you can't make people enlightened by Act of Parliament; and so, until the Revolution levelled all distinctions, the Cagots were still regarded with suspicion and dislike. Who were these people who were forced to live, and to pray, and to be buried apart, and who, under different names, are found along the coast the whole way from Navarre to Brittany?

One set of historians and antiquaries takes them for descendants of the Visigoths, whom Clovis the Frank routed at Vouillé. Cagot is explained to be *caas* (Bernois for chien) Goths, "dogs of Goths." The Goths, we know, were Arians, the Franks Trinitarians; and the orthodox clergy celebrated the victory of the barbarian Clovis as a triumph of truth over heresy in its deadliest form. As for the leprosy with which the Cagots were supposed to have been tainted, we know that the word was constantly used as a synonym for unorthodox views; the Gothic leprosy may well have been the leprosy of Arianism. The objection to this view—and it is a fatal objection—is that, whereas the Cagots were low-class outcasts, "most of the noble houses of Aquitaine and of Spain," says old Francis of Belleforest, royal chronicler under Charles the Ninth, "are of Gothic stock." Moreover, even if Cagot could be got out of *Caas* Goths, what is to be done with Capots, Gahets, Gafets, Agotes, Chrestians, and all the other local names by which these outcasts were known?

Others held that they were the des-

cendants of the Albigenses who survived the horrible cruelties of Simon of Montfort's crusade. This belief was held by the Cagots themselves—unless, indeed, it was only a pretence to get rid of the more cruel charge of leprosy. In 1514 the Agotes of Navarre wrote to Pope Leo the Tenth, and also to the States-General at Pampeluna, saying: "We be the great grandchildren of those who in old time held with one Raymond of Toulouse, and made rebellion against the Holy See." "No," said the speaker of the Pampeluna parliament, "ye are not sprung, as ye affirm, from Raymond his company, but ye be the brood of Gehazi the liar, the servant of Elisha, on whom, and on his seed forever, the prophet laid the leprosy of Naaman." Leo the Tenth, however, was not the man to be moved by scriptural precedents; he declared in favour of the Agotes; and so did the Pampeluna States-General; and so, a few years after, did the Emperor Charles the Fifth. There was a reason why statesmen both in France and Spain should be anxious to put the Agotes on the same footing as the rest of the population, because hitherto they had paid no taxes. The result was that henceforth the Spanish outcasts paid like other people, but did not, by so doing, receive that social stamp which alone could give effect to edicts about equality; they were still shunned, as in Spain they are to this day, where the first move was made towards giving them political freedom.

It was not till the time of Colbert and Le Pelletier that French statesmen found out the profit which could be made by wiping off the stigma from the Cagots. "There are from two thousand to two thousand five hundred of them in Bearn alone; and if each of these were to pay two golden louis of ten livres each per year, his majesty would be benefited to the extent of forty-five thousand or fifty thousand livres; and the state of these poor creatures would be much amended." It is to be feared that the Cagots did not appreciate this interested kindness on the part of the government. "If we are still Cagots," they might have said, "in all the other relations of life, and Frenchmen only so far as tax-paying is concerned, we had rather be Cagots altogether."

It is, however, a sufficient answer to the plea that these outcasts were the descendants of the Albigenses to remark that, not only were they spread all over the western seaboard of France, whereas the

Albigenses belonged to Languedoc, but they are mentioned as Chrestians in the cartulary of the Abbey of Luc, in the year 1000, and as Gafos in the Fuero (or Domesday Book) of Navarre, compiled in 1074, while the Albigenses first appeared about 1180, and were crushed down in 1215. But the old laws of Navarre provide for cases in which even nobles themselves shall become Gafos; so that the idea of their belonging to some particular race is clearly nonsense. Undoubtedly they were lepers, against whom all kinds of quarantine rules were established in the Middle Ages; and not without reason, for with the crusades began an epidemic of leprosy in some of its worst forms, which lasted, with little help from medical science, till it died out, as suddenly as it had arisen, early in the fifteenth century. Several of the names point in this direction. Gafos is from gaf, a hook, because a contraction of the muscles of the hand is a sign of leprosy; Cagot is the old Breton kakod, leprous; Christian comes from lepers (brethren of St. Lazarus), having been called "Christ's poor." Moreover, by the decrees of many councils, lepers were to worship apart, to be buried apart, to have a distinctive dress, and by no means to walk barefoot—the same rules which were laid down for the Cagots. Cagots, too, were reported to have no tips to their ears; and of lepers, in like manner, it was said, even by so scientific a physician as Ambrose Paré: "They have their ears round, because the lobe and fleshy parts are eaten away for want of sufficient nutriment." Lepers, again, like Cagots, were not allowed to give testimony in law-courts; neither class was permitted to hold any public office; neither paid the taille; and both were directly under the clergy, not under the feudal lords. The identity of the two is not impugned by the absurd stories told of the Cagots, that they had tails, that they never needed to blow their noses, and such like. Nothing was too bad to be laid to the charge of folks suffering from an incurable, highly contagious disease, almost certain to be transmitted to the sufferer's posterity. There were at least three thousand lepers in France, out of ten thousand in all Europe, in the thirteenth century. Repressive measures were but natural. They existed in England too, where, outside old towns, like Coventry, the site of the Leper Hospital is still to be seen. In France they lasted on long after the occasion for them had passed away.

Real leprosy is now almost unknown, except in Norway—where all kinds of skin disease are very prevalent—and in the islands of the Greek archipelago. It is also fearfully common in the Sandwich Islands, and all through Oceania; where also that form of it known as albinism is found far oftener than elsewhere. Albinos out there, as described by medical travellers, would answer exactly to the description of the Cagots of the later period from the middle of the fourteenth century, when the worst kind of leprosy, the horrible elephantiasis, had almost disappeared. Leprosy, then, like other diseases, seems to wear itself out if the breed among whom it is epidemic is strong enough to resist its first violence. Sometimes this is not the case; smallpox, for instance, has wholly destroyed some races. But along the Atlantic seaboard leprosy, though, for some unexplained reason, it was for a time more prevalent there than elsewhere in Europe, gradually died away; though the descendants of those who were affected with it were still subject to the same quarantine which had been needful in the case of their forefathers. All the mystery, then, which French writers have thrown over the subject disappears. If the Cagots had belonged to a foreign stock, they would, like the gipsies, have shown it by their language and their features. M. de Rochas, who visited most of the Cagot villages on both sides of the Pyrenees, found the inhabitants as fresh and ruddy as their neighbours; while the persistent belief that they have no tips to their ears, he found to be as baseless as the old notion that they had tails. Bozate, in the valley of the Baztan, or upper Bidassoa, is the headquarters of the Cagots. They used to be so persecuted there that, about a century ago, Count Saceda offered them a home in Guadalupe, near Madrid. He gave them land and called the place New Baztan; but the dry monotony of the Castilian plains was a poor exchange for the glens and streamlets of their old home. They got home-sick, and most of them found their way back to Navarre, preferring the outcast's life, amid their accustomed surroundings, to quiet and respectability elsewhere. Blue blood, we know, tells more in Spain than in most other places; and more in Navarre than in the rest of Spain. It was not till 1819 that the need of proving noble birth, *limpieza de sangre*, before applying for any public

office, was done away with. Till then, no one could be a magistrate's clerk, a tax-gatherer, a custom-house officer, or even a policeman, or a letter-carrier, unless he could satisfy the authorities that none of his ancestors was a Jew, a Moor, an Agote, or had ever come under the ban of "the holy office of the Inquisition." And, when legal disabilities existed no longer, the Agotes are still practically kept in Coventry. As late as 1842 they had to appeal against the prejudice which kept them out of the churches and the graveyards; and to this day, as we saw above, their neighbours decline to intermarry with them.

Yet they look just like the rest of those Basques who are so proud of being "all gentlemen." M. de Rochas found some three hundred of them in Bozate, almost all farmers, healthy and strong; perhaps a trifle more light-complexioned than most of the French Basques. They sit in their old place in their parish church of Ariczun, but their separate holy-water stoup is dry, and they are allowed to dip their fingers into the same water as their neighbours. After vespers, however, when all the rest of the parish turns out to walk on the plaza of Ariczun, the Bozate folks go home and have a dance among themselves. Their own opinion is that they are the descendants of an army that was defeated so long ago, that all record of why they fought, or whence they came, is forgotten.

On the French side there is more difference, although there is less prejudice. This seems owing to the Gafets having kept to the trades—weaving, rope-making, cooperage—to which they were anciently restricted, instead of having turned farmers, as in Spain. Their children go to the same schools as the rest. Since 1848 the elders are admissible as mayors and town-councilmen. There is still a strong feeling against intermarrying with them; and no wonder, says M. de Rochas, for they are an unhealthy set, sitting all day over their looms in damp cottages, instead of working in the fields. They emigrate, more even than the other Basques, to the Argentine Republic; which will, by-and-by, contain more specimens of this strange old Basque race than the Basque provinces themselves. Going farther north, we find that in Gascony and Aquitaine in general the distinction between the Gafets and the rest of the population has almost wholly passed away; but in Brittany, Cagots, or

Caquets, are outcasts still. They live in their own quarters, called Madeleines; they are mostly ropemakers; and the conservative Bretons dislike them almost as much as their forefathers were disliked in the old time. Unlike the Gafets of the French Pyrenees—who, like their Spanish brethren, believe themselves descended from some beaten army—they have no traditions. A doctor told us that there is a marked scorbutic taint in most of their families, and that they are gloomy, suspicious, and ill-tempered. He thought their unwholesome dwellings, their insufficient food, and their marrying in-and-in, would account for their degraded state. The last reason, by-the-way, is more than doubtful; the Agotes have always married among themselves, but are none the worse for it. Nor can it be that in Brittany they were worse treated than elsewhere. The Bretons are prejudiced enough, but the Spaniards are at least as bad; and yet the Agotes thrive as well as their neighbours. It must be something in the climate. The soft damp air of Brittany has, perhaps, hindered the old mischief from wholly wearing itself out, as it has done under more favourable conditions.

I was astonished to find, in modern France, this remnant of mediæval intolerance. People do not mob the Cagots nowadays, shouting: "What's happened to your ear? Have you sold the tip of it by auction?" Nor, when a Cagot is married, do all the idle lads of the place serenade the couple with horn-blowing, pot-and-pan beating, and a regular marrowbone-and-cleaver concert. There is no railing now to keep them from the rest of the congregation; they are not compelled to practise any particular trade; and those who have kept to their old trade of weaving are not accused of cagotting the cloth, and so rendering it unfit for honest Christians to wear. Nor are Cagot carpenters restricted, as they used to be, to coffin-making and gallows-building; nor Cagot ropemakers compelled to furnish a halter whenever anyone is to be hanged. They may walk about barefoot as much as they like; they can bring their corn to the common mill, and can drink and draw water at the common fountain.

Altogether, life has grown easier for the Cagots; but still the prejudice remains, in corners of Spain and Brittany at any rate. It is a relic of the good old times when Jews were supposed to eat little children at Easter, and were only tolerated because

it was possible every now and then to squeeze a good deal of money out of them.

Cagot, then, you will often meet with in French as a word of reproach; and if you travel much in France, you are pretty sure to come, if not upon some villages of Cagots, at any rate on some signs in church and graveyard of their having led their life apart. Who they were there seems little doubt. It is, no doubt, hard to prove a negative, and there were so many immigrations in the earlier Middle Ages, that a swarm of Cagots may have come in as the gipsies did later on. But Cagots and lepers were treated so much in the same way, that such a supposition is needless. The medical question—the almost total disappearance of a disease which our forefathers regarded with superstitious horror—is a curious one; and not less curious is the persistence, up till now, of one of the prejudices of the “good old time.” It would be interesting to find some trace of the same separation in church in our own country. The squint, or “hagioscope,” often seen piercing a thick pillar, is generally supposed to have been made that those to whom the officiating priest would otherwise have been invisible might have a view of him. It may have served for some who were not allowed to mix with the general congregation. At any rate, there is “the lepers’ bourne” in Durham cathedral—possibly also elsewhere. And everyone knows the saying, that “the bad people” were buried on the north side of the churchyard. Was that side ever confined to lepers? Were some of the so-called priests’ doors—now mostly walled up—entrances for outcasts in days when we also kept our outcasts “afar off?”

MY STEADY PUPIL.

A STORY.

“Now, Mr. Baker, let us understand each other at once,” Lord Hunsdon had said, leaning back in his official armchair, and tapping the massive signet-ring on his fat finger with the official paper-cutter. “I have great pleasure, as I have said, in entrusting to you the task of my nephew’s education. All I have heard of you, and what little I have seen of you, induces me to regard you as an excellent travelling tutor. It only remains for me to state my views, as briefly as I can,” here a glance at the official clock, “for I have to receive a deputation immediately. Cecil Manvers has a fortune of his own—his

mother’s money—and will in all probability succeed me in the title and property. I don’t want the boy to turn out a bookworm, a milksop, or a scamp. Make him a well-informed, honourable English gentleman, with enough knowledge of the world to steer clear of its worst perils, and I shall be more than satisfied. And nothing could conduce better to this than two years on the Continent in such good hands as yours, Mr. Baker. I shall see you again, of course, before you leave England, but, just now,” another glance at the clock, “my time is positively not my own.”

And I took the under-secretary’s hint, and retired, almost tumbling over the excited deputation as I made my way downstairs. Next week, Cecil Manvers and I went abroad.

Our first year of continental travel passed off pleasantly enough. I found my pupil not merely intelligent and quick to learn, but bright, frank, and unassuming, and singularly docile for so spirited a lad. The duties of what is sometimes irreverently styled a bear-leader are not always enviable, but Cecil, to do him justice, was by far too generous a youngster to indulge in the sneers and slights that often fall to the lot of the roving instructor of gilded youth. He had the command of a good deal of money, for it was a theory of his guardian’s that early stinting in this respect lays the foundation for subsequent extravagance, but he showed no inclination for the freaks and follies of his contemporaries, and over and over again did I congratulate myself on the good luck that had provided me with such a pupil. The Rhine, Switzerland, Tyrol, each and all of these we had visited in the pleasant summer-time; we had wintered in Italy, and the next spring found us in Paris.

It was the time when the Grand Paris Exhibition—Exhibitions had not as yet grown common enough to be classed as bores—attracted myriads to the then imperial capital of France. Emperor, court, and empire were in their first freshness, decked, too, with the prestige which success confers; for the great struggle with Russia was going on victoriously for the allies, and the cordial feeling between France and England was at its warmest. In 1855 people had not yet become ashamed of enjoying themselves, and whatever the merits of the show might be, it certainly secured the suffrages

of the well-dressed, well-pleased crowds of holiday makers. My pupil and I made the new Palace of Industry our daily lounge, and so did a French friend of ours, destined to play no unimportant part in this story.

It was by accident that we had made acquaintance with Colonel the Baron Duplessis. Cecil had a walking-cane, with a handsome gold head, which had belonged to his father, and this cane he chanced to leave on one of the marble tables of the Exhibition monster restaurant. Half-an-hour later, when my pupil discovered his loss, and went back in hot haste to seek for his missing property, it was courteously restored to him, with a bow and a smile, by a tall, elderly Frenchman, with the inevitable red ribbon adorning his tightly-buttoned frockcoat, and of what his compatriots designate as a distinguished appearance. This old officer had observed ourselves as the occupants of a table near his own, and had been prompt enough to prevent the costly walking-stick from being purloined by a light-fingered under-waiter. This little kindness led in time to a friendship which might be called intimate.

The colonel, as became a man of ancient lineage and reduced fortunes, lived in a gloomy old street on the left bank of the Seine, far away from the glare and glitter of the modern Paris. The Rue de Loches was the name of the street, and the colonel's house, number Sixteen, was on the shady side of it—a big dingy mansion, with a grass-grown courtyard, a walled garden, and windows into which the sun never seemed to shine. The ghostly pictures on the wall, and the heavy furniture were in keeping with this dismal dwelling. The colonel's family consisted merely of his wife and daughter; the former haggard and nervous, the latter plain and stupid, with a frightened look, I thought, in her dull eyes. Madame la baronne spoke little, and mademoiselle, like most well-brought-up French girls, was as mute as a fish.

The only attraction in number Sixteen, Rue de Loches, was the gay good-humour, tempered by the dignified shrewdness of an experienced man of the world, of its master. M. Duplessis, even to me, seemed singularly agreeable, and gained a still larger share of Cecil's regard. It so happened that my pupil had a turn for military subjects—less, perhaps, for dress and drill than for the scientific side of a

soldier's life—and his boyish curiosity appeared to please the colonel, who himself was, as he said jestingly, merely a worn-out war-horse turned out to grass, but ready to respond to the first twang of the trumpet. So it came about that Cecil and the baron made frequent excursions, now to be present at the trial of a rifled cannon, now to go over fortifications, see a review, or ramble through the arsenal, without my being of the party.

It often happened, too, after the expeditions I have described, that Cecil Manvers went to drink tea à l'Anglaise, and pass the evening at the baron's house. I felt, on this head, no misgivings, such as would have beset me had I allowed my charge to go out alone into gayer company. To theatre and opera, or to those balls and evening receptions of the Parisian great world to which Lord Hunadon's letters procured us easy access, I always accompanied Cecil. But I was not sorry when he seemed to grow indifferent to dance and drama, and to prefer spending his hours in the quiet Rue de Loches. Why not? I was thankful for the opportunity of finishing my versified translation of Horace, a work from which I hoped to derive fame and fortune. And then, too, I had such complete confidence in Cecil and in his military mentor. What harm, in such company, could accrue to him? Mademoiselle's eyes were not bright enough to win his young affections, and the baronne's weak tea, and trictrac at four sous points, would not be likely to derange his nerves or empty his pockets.

"A monsieur," hinted the concierge one day, thrusting his bald head into the room where I sat, cudgelling my brains as I strove to convert Lesbia and Chloe into honest English girls, "wishes much to see monsieur." The stranger was not far off, as the janitor of our furnished hotel thus spoke, and perhaps was accustomed to the process of self-introduction. At any rate, I soon found myself looking up from the oblong piece of pasteboard, on which were lithographed the words: "Jules Carnet, Sous-chef: Brigade de Sûreté," at the owner of name and card, who stood bowing there before me, a glossy hat of the bell-crown pattern, affected by loyal followers of the new emperor, in his gloved hand. There was nothing very notable about my visitor—a plump middle-aged Frenchman, with tight coat, well-waxed moustaches, and the imperialist chin-tuft—nothing, except the feline

quickness and keenness of his eyes, which I felt to be reading me as easily as if I carried my character, in large print, outside my waistcoat.

"I gather from this card," said I, somewhat bashfully, "that you belong, M. Carnet, to the—"

"To the police!" rejoined my new acquaintance; "yes, monsieur, I have the honour to belong to the police. It is now my duty, in compliance with instructions from headquarters, to apprise you that your pupil—Sir Manvers—is deceiving you."

"That Cecil Manvers—my pupil—is deceiving me?" I repeated, in utter incredulity. The sub-chief of the French detective department lifted his high shoulders in a shrug that Brasseur on the stage might have envied.

"It is my painful, my distressing duty," he said, in a thick whisper, "to disturb, monsieur, your beautiful confidence in your youthful friend. What will you, sir? Young men will be young men. It is part of the Herculean task of our superior police to drop a word of warning to parents and guardians who are hood-winked. I do so, now. Sir Manvers—that youth so discreet—he spends his evenings in a private gambling-house, full of the worst company, Rive Gauche, Rue de Loches, number Sixteen."

On me this extraordinary assertion produced very much the effect of a sudden plunge into cold water. It fairly took away my breath, and I sat gasping and staring in blank amazement. Then I rallied my wits sufficiently to reply. There had, I said, been some preposterous mistake. Mr. Cecil Manvers passed his evenings in the society of a quiet French family of good position, that of Colonel the Baron Duplessis.

But here M. Carnet broke in, arching his eyebrows:

"Éh, eh, the Baron Duplessis?" said he, dryly; "I was not aware that to his epaulettes of colonel he added the baronial coronet. Well, Monsieur Baker, I have dropped you a hint, well intentioned, foi de Carnet! Watch more strictly over your pupil, for the intimacy of the Duplessis household is apt to prove costly to a neophyte. And"—this more seriously—"should you require help from the police to cut the knot of this imbroglia, you have only to seek me—me, Jules Carnet, at your service. The address I have pencilled, see, on this card, Seven,

Rue Joachim. I replace, for the next few nights, the commissary at that Bureau."

And, with a flourish and a bow, he was gone.

Left alone, my reflections were very bitter. I could not doubt the truth or the timeliness of the warning that had been conveyed to me, and without loss of time I set out for the Rue de Loches.

It was very dark, and as I crossed the bridge a fine chilly rain began to fall, but I scarcely heeded it, but pressed on. I reached the Rue de Loches, and, just as I had raised my hand to the bell-handle of number Sixteen, I noticed that the gate was, contrary to custom, slightly ajar. Instinctively I pushed it open, passed in, and silently reclosed it behind me. No one observed me as I crossed the grass-grown courtyard, and, unchallenged, entered the big old house, the windows of which were now ablaze with light, while strains of music reached my ears, mingling with the clink of glasses and the murmur of conversation. The well-known staircase, however, was clear, and I met with no impediment as I traversed two small rooms, and, myself screened by a heavy crimson curtain, commanded a view of the great gloomy salon and its occupants.

More than forty persons, as I judged, were present, and of this number, besides the colonel's wife and daughter, but three were women. One of these, a professional performer, I should say, was seated at the piano. The other two, bejewelled, painted, and with elaborate chignons and waving fans, were mere living decorations, as it appeared to me, of the scene. As for the male guests, there was the usual mixture of gulls and sharpers—the latter element predominating—to be found in such places. All were well dressed, and several were more or less intoxicated. Choice viands, varied wines and liqueurs were grouped, amid flowers and silver, on a buffet adjacent, and two lynx-eyed serving-men, with very evil countenances, and baggy blue liveries that might have been supplied by the costumier of a third-rate theatre, were busy in ministering to the creature comforts of the company.

Some game, lansquenet or baccarat, was going on, and in it some eighteen or nineteen players were engaged. Near the head of the table, confronting the dealer, sat Cecil, his face flushed, his eyes sparkling, a champagne glass in his hand, and a great heap of gold and notes lying on the velvet cloth before him. Most of

the other faces near him, including that of the Baron Duplessis, expressed annoyance, dismay, or savage ill-humour, and I saw at once that this was an instance of one of those extraordinary runs of luck which sometimes enable a tyro to conquer the wildest practitioners at the gambling-table. Again and again the cards were dealt, and still fickle Fortune befriended Cecil. The pile of gold before him swelled and swelled, until at last, with a muttered oath, the last stake of the bank was reluctantly pushed towards my pupil.

"Broke the bank, by Jove! I said I'd do it!" cried the lad, with boyish exultation, as he held out his glass to be replenished.

I was in the very act of rushing from my place of concealment to reproach my pupil with his duplicity, and to fling his ill-gotten gains broadcast among the harpies who surrounded him, when I happened to observe one of the evil-visaged serving-men, in obedience to a nod from Colonel the Baron Duplessis, add a few drops from a little vial that he carried hidden in his sleeve, to the foaming contents of the broad glass of champagne which he presently placed in Cecil's outstretched hand. The lad swallowed the frothing wine at a draught, and again laughed in foolish triumph, as he passed his fingers through the gold coin and rustling notes. And then—so rapid, no doubt, was the action of the drug—his bright eyes swam and grew dim, he nodded drowsily, and sank forward in a sort of stupor, his head resting on his arm. Instantly there began to be a movement among the company, and with many a "Bon soir" and "Au plaisir," the majority of the guests took their leave.

Tang! The sharp little hammer of the bronze clock on the chimneypiece, as it struck the hour of one, suggested to me the necessity of being prompt and cool, if I would save Cecil Manvers from a worse peril than the mere loss of money. By this time only five persons, excepting my pupil, remained in the room, for even the baron's scared wife and dull-eyed daughter had disappeared, and of these five, two were the serving-men in theatrical livery. The other three were the baron himself; a cadaverous little old fellow, with a hatchet face and a harsh voice; and a big, black-browed man, whose sharp white teeth, filed to a point like those of savages, looked disagreeably wolfish whenever he smiled or spoke. I grew seriously alarmed as I noted the significant glances which

these worthies exchanged, as they surrounded the sleeping stripling. That they would allow the lad to carry off his winnings I had never thought probable, but now it seemed evident that something beyond commonplace knavery was in question.

"Who sleeps, sups," remarked the senior of the group, with a cackling laugh that chilled my blood as I heard it. "Your soothing syrup, Duplessis, did the trick well."

"Ay," replied the baron, as he passed the flame of a candle before Cecil's unconscious eyes; "it was time, comrades, to pour out something stronger than Clicquot, for, peste! what cards that English boy did hold, as if the devil had shuffled the pack; and, trust me, we'd not have found it easy to make him lose the gold he won! Young as he is, he has sense and spirit too, and he had the effrontery to tell me to-night that he was ashamed of playing tricks on his good-natured tutor, and that, win or lose, he'd gamble no more."

The stout-built man responded with some brutal joke about a tender young pigeon that was ready for the spit.

"There is no risk, no risk at all," said the eldest of the scoundrels; "what can they prove against us, hein? The young gentleman has won our money, not we his. He has drunk much wine. He insisted on returning home on foot, with his gold in his pockets. Is it our fault, M. le Président, if those pockets were empty when the body, discovered in the Seine, was laid out on the wet slabs of the Morgue?"

I shuddered, for there was something peculiarly hideous in the affectation of the old villain's manner, as, drawing himself up, and extending one arm in forensic fashion, he pleaded his own cause before an imaginary tribunal. But the two evil-visaged serving-men and the burly black-browed ruffian were of another mind, for they laughed with evident enjoyment of the jest.

"That for the Cour d'Assises!" retorted the big man, snapping his fingers; "and now, mon vieux, if you like, I am ready to administer the coup-de-pouce to this young aristo," and he stretched forth his brawny hands, half jocularly, towards Cecil's throat.

"Not yet," returned the baron, peremptorily; "not yet this hour to come. One o'clock is too early for our good friends, Jacques and Jean Baptiste here, to carry such a load through the riverside

streets. Better wait till the last wine-shop closes, and the last drunkard has reeled homewards."

And then all five sat down together at the table, in familiar conversation, much of which was to me unintelligible, sipping Curaçoa and Chartreuse the while with appreciative relish. The only one who looked careworn and anxious was the colonel himself. I did not, however, linger long to play the part of eaves-dropper. Clearly, if I would save Cecil, I must lose no time in summoning rescue. Noiselessly, cautiously, I threaded my way through the darkling antechambers and down the solitary staircase. I reached the courtyard. It was empty, and the porter's lodge dark and deserted. Softly unclosing the gate, I glided out into the street, and, mindful of the address which M. Carnet had given me, flew rather than walked to Number Seven, Rue Joachim.

The inspector of police listened with eager interest to my story. Twice he interrupted me, with an urbane apology for the rudeness of the act, that he might apply his lips to the mouthpiece of a call-pipe that communicated with the lower salle of the Bureau, and when I had finished he rubbed his hands and almost purred, in feline fashion, over the news I had brought.

"A great haul for the net of the law!" he murmured blandly; "Georges Le Moine—for your corpulent friend, Mr. Baker, can be no other—runaway forger, burglar, and assassin, much wanted in his old quarters at Toulon; then Old Vinet, of Lyons, dit Trompe-la-loi; then the Duplessis himself, who has a long score to settle with Justice; and the two minor villains, Jacques Peach and Jean Baptiste Tellier, thrown in to complete the batch of jail-birds. Now, my children!" he added loudly, and the door opened, disclosing four gendarmes and eight agents, armed to the teeth; "be quick and silent. This gentleman will guide us. Only one of this gibier-de-potence is likely to make serious resistance. I mean Le Moine. If he does——"

"Very well, inspector," answered an agent of police, as he examined the lock of his pistol.

But there was no fighting. The whole rascally gang gave proof of the most abject cowardice, when pounced on by the police, and did not even attempt to use the weapons which four out of the five had concealed about their persons. In prison, each made a confession damaging

to the defence of the remainder, and I believe all were ultimately sentenced to long terms of imprisonment at Toulon or Lambessa, while I received praises, unmerited I am sure, for the share I had taken in providing for the safety of my pupil. Cecil Manvers is Lord Hunsdon now, and has long since learned to profit by the follies of his youth; but we are fast friends, and my former charge has never forgotten the debt of gratitude which he declares himself to owe me for my coolness on that night in the Rue de Loches.

SOMETHING ABOUT SHOES.

SHOES as articles of apparel are, undoubtedly, of great antiquity, and have in all times been worn in some form or other by the people of civilised countries. The practice of shoe and sandal wearing can be traced back for some thousands of years, and is probably of Eastern origin. Thus we find frequent mention of the shoe in the Bible, from the book of Exodus to the Acts. The well-known injunction to the Israelites, as to how they were to eat the Passover, may be mentioned as an early instance where shoes are referred to, though we have before this, in the account of Moses and the burning bush, an earlier reference, giving an antiquity of over three thousand years to the shoe. There is, however, mention made of a shoe-latchet as early as the time of Abraham. The reader who refers to Cruden will find evidence there of the frequent mention of the shoe in Scripture, to some instances of which reference will be made later on.

Among the ancient Hebrews shoes were made of leather, rush, or wool, those of the soldiers being sometimes of brass or iron, tied with thongs passed under the feet. The ancient Greeks wore various kinds of shoes, the women of distinction wearing sandals, and the Lacedæmonians wearing red shoes. Shoes among the Greeks were made so high as to reach generally to the middle of the leg, and were often of gold and silk and other precious stuffs. The Egyptians made their shoes of papyrus or palm-leaves.

Coming to the time of the Romans, we find shoe-making assuming something of the nature of an art. The Romans wore two kinds of shoes, the calceus covering the whole foot, not unlike our modern fashion, and the sandal or slipper covering only the sole of the foot. These were often

sumptuously ornamented, Caligula having his enriched with precious stones, Nero his shod with silver, and his empress, Poppæa, hers with gold. We read of *sandalia pretiosa* displaying the most elaborate decorations—"cum imaginibus Regum in rotellis, cum flosculis de perlis Indici, coloris et leopardis de perlis albis," &c. Some remarkable examples of Roman shoes were found in a tomb at Southfleet, in Kent, in 1802. They were of purple leather, reticulated in hexagonal designs of beautiful workmanship, each hexagonal division being worked in gold. Indeed, the Romans seem altogether to have been liberal patrons of the followers of St. Crispin, for the streets of the imperial city, in the time of Domitian, were so blocked up with cobblers' stalls that he caused them to be removed.

In England the fashion of wearing shoes can be traced back to the earliest times. According to Meyrick, the shoes worn by the Belgic Britons were made of raw cow-hide that had the hair turned outwards, and coming up to the ankles. A great beau of the time of William Rufus, called Robert the Horned, wore shoes with long sharp points, stuffed with tow, and twisted in a spiral form. This fashion took the fancy of the people of that day immensely, and the points went on increasing yearly to the reign of Richard the Second, when they had to be tied to the knees of the wearer to save him from being encumbered in walking. This tying, or fastening, in the case of gentlemen was by chains of silver or silver gilt. In Chaucer's time the upper part of these shoes was cut to imitate a church window. The rank of the wearer in those days was known by the length of his *poulaines*. "The men," says Paradin, "wore them with a point before, half a foot long; the richer and more eminent personages wore them a foot, and princes two feet long." By an Act of the reign of Edward the Fourth, the absurd lengths to which these points had attained was limited; and no one under the rank of a lord was to wear shoes more than ten inches long, and all cobblers making them were to be fined and cursed by the clergy.

Shoes, more or less ornamental, appear to have continued in vogue among Englishmen down to a very late period. Perhaps the most splendid pair of shoes we read of is that worn by Sir Walter Raleigh on great court occasions. They were of buff leather, so gorgeously covered with

precious stones as to have exceeded in value the sum of six thousand six hundred pounds. Our present style of shoe was introduced in 1633, but buckles were not used till 1670. High heels were fashionable in three reigns previous to ours, those of Charles the Second, James the Second, and William and Mary. The man of fashion in 1720 wore his shoes square at the toes, with diminutive diamond buckles, a monstrous flap on the instep, and high heels. "Red heels to his shoes" is one of the directions for making a beau in 1727, and Gay, in his *Trivia*, thus satirises the fashion:

At every step he dreads the wall to lose,
And risks, to save a coach, his red-heeled shoes!

The customs connected with shoes are as many in number as they are various in kind. We first take those mentioned in Scripture, and of those again the first which occurs to one's mind is in connection with the command given to Moses at the burning bush to remove his shoes, because the ground upon which he stood was holy—a command which Joshua also received when he was told how to conduct the siege of Jericho. This custom has prevailed in the East from the earliest times, as this proves, and continues to this day. It is a mark of respect to take off the shoes on entering a mosque or temple, and Mohammedans are very strict in enforcing the practice. Ives, in his *Travels*, says that "at the doors of an Indian pagoda are seen as many slippers and sandals as there are hats hanging up in our churches."

The well-known custom at the Burmese and Siamese courts of approaching the emperor without shoes is of very ancient standing. A serious difficulty arose during the mission of Sir Douglas Forsyth to the Burmese king, some time ago, as to whether the envoy was to take off his boots. Opinions varied as to whether it was expedient or consistent with the dignity of a representative of the greatest sovereign in the world to yield to this old Burmese court custom, but ultimately the cloud that threatened the success of the whole mission was removed by the good taste of our Indian officials, who instructed Sir Douglas to comply with this punctilio of Burmese etiquette, and by so doing, he was enabled to end his mission satisfactorily.

A more serious result occurred, however, in earlier times at the Siamese court through a non-compliance with this custom. Dr. Mason, in his work on *Burmah*, says that there is a kind of tradition at Ava

that in 1281, a Chinese embassy of ten nobles and one thousand horsemen was put to death by order of the then King of Pagan, because they insisted on appearing in the royal presence with their boots or shoes on. This led to a long and bloody war between the two countries, the Chinese invading the King of Pagan's territory with an army of six million horse and twenty million foot, and eventually being victorious. The tradition, it will be observed, is liberal as to the numbers of the Chinese army.

The Mosaic law ordained that should two brothers dwell together, and one of them die and have no child, the wife of the deceased should marry her brother-in-law. Should the brother-in-law object to this arrangement, the woman was to go and complain to the elders, and they were to call the delinquent and speak to him; and should he then persist in his objection, his sister-in-law would go up to him, "in the presence of the elders and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face," saying: "So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house." The name of this man was to be called "the house of him that hath his shoe loosed." Upon this, a writer in an early number of *Notes and Queries*, observes: "His giving up the shoe was a symbol that he abandoned all dominion over her; and her spitting before him was a defiance and an assertion of independence." The same writer continues: "This practice is still further illustrated by the story of Ruth. Her nearest kinsman refused to marry her, and to redeem her inheritance; he was publicly called on to do so by Boaz, and as publicly refused." And, says the Bible, "this was the manner in former times in Israel, concerning redeeming, and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour, and this was a testimony in Israel." The kinsman by drawing off his shoe renounced Ruth and all dominion over her, and also his prior right of marriage.

The emperor of the Abyssinians, according to Castell, used the casting of a shoe as a sign of dominion. The same sense would not seem to be conveyed in the Psalmist's words, "Over Edom have I cast out my shoe," implying the abandonment of Edom by God. We find that Ezekiel, when commanded to abstain from mourning, was told to put his shoes upon his

feet, and from this it is evident that the Jewish custom in those days was to mourn without shoes. And Addison, in his account of the modern mourning of the Jews in Barbary, says: "The relations of the deceased, for seven days after the interment, stir not abroad, or if by some extraordinary occasion they are found to go out of doors it is without shoes; which is a token with them that they have lost a dear friend."

The Baptist, it will be remembered, expresses his unworthiness to bear the shoes of the Lord, a work for servants alone among the Jews. It was considered too mean for a scholar or disciple to do, which the Jews expressed in the saying, "all services which a servant does for his master, a disciple does for his master, except unloosing his shoes."

The worship of shoes may seem a strange custom according to our notions, but it takes place in China at this day, and is mentioned by Dr. Denny in his valuable book on the folk-lore of that country. Among the practices which Chinese women resort to to secure the blessing of children, is one of obtaining a shoe from the temple of the Goddess of Children which has been worn by her. "This is taken home, and, being placed beside the image or tablet of the goddess, receives equal worship; and, should the desired object be attained, a pair of shoes exactly resembling the one obtained must be returned to the temple. Sometimes several are taken from an equal number of temples, and in that case the goddess from whom the last shoe was received is rewarded with most offerings."

Shoes have always borne an important part in the ceremonies connected with betrothal and marriage. The writer just quoted says that a Chinese bridegroom, in the case of a betrothal put an end to by the death of the intended bride, goes to the house of mourning, asking for the last pair of shoes his betrothed wore before death. He takes these home, and for two years burns incense to them, believing that her spirit will be present, enticed thither by the pair of shoes, and acknowledging her in thus doing as his (intended) wife. An old author, St. Gregory of Tours, refers to a custom at betrothals in his days, when he says the bridegroom, having given a ring to his betrothed, presents her with a shoe.

One of the best-known customs connected with shoes is that of throwing

them after a wedding-party on their way from church or elsewhere. It is, say the authors of Lancashire Folk-lore, a relic of Anglo-Saxon or Danish usages, along with many other wedding usages of ancient origin. The Lancashire custom is to throw an old shoe on leaving the house to be married, as a preventive of future unhappiness, and an omen of good luck and prosperity. In Norfolk, it is also the custom to throw the shoe after the wedding-party on proceeding to the church. In Yorkshire, according to a writer in Hone's Table Book, in 1827, there was a custom called "trashing," which signified pelting people with old shoes on their return from church on the wedding-day. "Trashing" had at first some *raison d'être*, but as time went on this became forgotten, and the custom was indiscriminately practised among the lower orders. The Kentish custom is for one of the groomsmen to throw the shoe, after which the bridesmaids run, she who gets it believing that she will be married first. She in turn throws it among the men, the man who receives the blow being also destined for marriage before the others. A custom not very dissimilar used to prevail among the noble Germans in the past. The bride on being conducted to the bride-chamber used to take off her shoe, and throw it among those who were near, everyone striving to catch it, and the successful one accepting it as an omen of his or her early and happy marriage. There is an old rhyme still extant, which gives an early date to this custom of throwing shoes at weddings:

When Britons bold
Wedded of old,
Sandals were backward thrown,
The pair to tell
That, ill or well,
The act was all their own.

This custom has of late been very generally revived, and is now as popular at fashionable London weddings as among our more superstitious country folk. A writer in an old number of *Notes and Queries* suggests that it was a symbol of renunciation of dominion and authority over the bride by her father or guardian; and the receipt of the shoe by the bridegroom, even if accidental, an omen that that authority was transferred to him.

Shoes are connected with the ceremony of marriage in other ways than those we have mentioned. Luther, we learn from Michelet, was at the marriage of Jean Luffte, and after supper he conducted the

bride to her chamber, telling the bridegroom that according to the common custom he ought to be master in his own house when his wife was not there; and for a symbol he took off the husband's shoe, and put it upon the head of the bed, "*afin qu'il prit ainsi la domination et gouvernement.*" Dr. Dennys says that one of the most singular coincidences of Chinese with Western notions is connected with shoes. It is customary at a marriage in South China for the bride to present her husband with a pair of shoes, by way of signifying that for the future she places herself under his control. These are carefully preserved in the family, and are never given away like other worn-out articles, it being deemed that to part with them portends an early separation between husband and wife. Dr. Dennys compares this with the statement in Braithwaite's *Boulster Lecture*, 1640, in which mention is made of an ancient custom, "when at any time a couple were married, the sole of the bridegroom's shoe was to be laid upon the bride's head, implying with what subjection she should serve her husband." Swedish brides have a custom of letting a shoe slip, or a handkerchief fall, in the hope that the bridegroom will from politeness stoop to pick it up. If he does it will be his lot to submit—i.e. bend his back—throughout his married life. In Denmark it is still a common saying, that a lady who rules her husband "has him under the slipper."

Orthodox eldest sisters, should they be unmarried, ought to dance at a younger sister's wedding without shoes, to counteract their ill-luck and procure them husbands.

Throwing an old shoe for luck is another old popular superstition. It is common throughout the kingdom, and readers of the *Queen's Journal* will find that it was even practised when her Majesty first entered the new castle of Balmoral on September 7th, 1855. The custom used to be common at Whitby when the vessels left for the Greenland whale fishery, the shoes being thrown after the ships as they passed the pier, as an omen of the throwers' wishes for their safe and successful return. Tennyson, in his *Lyrical Monologue*, has the following:

For thus thou shalt from all things seek
Marrow of mirth and laughter,
And wheresoe'er thou move, good luck
Shall throw her old shoe after.

A festival, or ceremony, called *Zopata*,

from a Spanish word signifying a shoe, prevails in Italy in the courts of certain persons on St. Nicholas's day. Persons hide presents in the shoes and slippers of those to whom they do honour, in such manner as may surprise them on the morrow when they come to dress.

Did the exigencies of space permit, this article might be still further continued; but we must draw to a conclusion with a few words concerning the cognate subject of horse-shoes. It is recorded that William the Conqueror gave to Simon St. Liz, a noble Norman, the town of Northampton, and the whole Hundred of Falkley, then valued at forty pounds per annum, to provide shoes for his horses; and other similar grants by different monarchs in subsequent times are also recorded.

In a number of *The Preston Pilot* for 1834, an account of a septennial Lancaster custom is given: "A large assembly congregated for the purpose of witnessing the renewing of the horse-shoe, at the Horse-shoe Corner, Lancaster; when the old shoe was taken up, and a new one put down, with 1834 engraved on it. Those who assembled to witness the ceremony were entertained with nut-brown ale, &c. Afterwards they had a merry charring, and then retired. In the evening they were again entertained with a good substantial supper. This custom is supposed to have originated at the time John O'Gaunt came into the town upon a noble charger, which lost its shoe at this place. The shoe was taken up and fixed in the middle of the street, and has ever since been replaced with a new one every seventh year, at the expense of the townsmen who reside near the place."

At Oakham, in Rutland, the custom exists of compelling every peer of parliament, the first time he passes through the town, to give a horse-shoe to be nailed upon the castle-gate; and if he refuse, the bailiff of the manor has power to arrest him in his progress, and take one from his horse's foot. Of the existing shoes nailed on the walls of the castle, those of Queen Elizabeth and George the Fourth are the most conspicuous.

The peculiar protection supposed to be afforded by horse-shoes against witchcraft must be mentioned. A horse-shoe nailed on the threshold was supposed to have the power of keeping the witches away, and Hudibras declares of the conjuror that he could

Chase evil spirits away by dint
Of cickle horse-shoe, hollow flint.

Scott, in *Redgauntlet*, also refers to the belief where he makes Summertrees say to Provost Crosbie: "Your wife's a witch, man; you should nail a horse-shoe on your chamber door."

In former days the travelling farrier was known by a broad canvas belt worn across his breast, and ornamented with yellow horse-shoes on a bright blue ground; and the horse-doctor's identity was fixed by his wearing a little iron shoe fastened in front of his hat.

ALL OR NOTHING.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOBY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," "GRIFFITH'S DOUBT,"
&c. &c.

CHAPTER XVIII. JOHN'S PISTOL.

It was a fine breezy afternoon, and the leaves were skimming along the grassy edges of the elm-bordered high-road on which the low wooden gates that gave admission to Bury House opened. It was a quiet road, and from the side opposite the rich flat fields stretched away to such a distance that, looking from the house, across the lawn, and over the tall, thick, well-kept hedge that formed the boundary of the little domain, one might fancy there was no intervening space at all between it and the lands opposite. In the summer, when the leaves were very thick upon the trees, and the laurel and privet hedges were in full force, passing carts and carriages and horsemen were invisible from Bury House; and it was a "sure sign" of autumn, Miss Susan Sandilands would remark, when the horses' heads, the tops of the vehicles, and the hats of the riders were visible between the hedge and the elm branches. From the porch, and from the windows at either side of it, the old ladies were accustomed to survey the smiling prospect with satisfaction as deep, very likely, as that of some great landed proprietor who is master of all he surveys, and of a great deal that is out of sight. They took a lively interest in the agricultural processes to which the fair fields opposite were subjected, watched the weather with solicitude in the haymaking season, and had the highest opinion of the nutritive quality of the after-grass. The road curved at a little distance above, and again at a little distance below, Bury House, and no other dwelling was in view, so that the effect of space was pleasantly conveyed,

and a touch of picturesqueness was added to the peaceful and prosperous aspect of the scene by a group of lofty and rather ragged trees, peopled by a numerous colony of rooks, which closed the view on one side of the house. They looked more picturesque than usual, for the wind was high enough to toss their shaggy heads about, and, looking at them from the porch, Julia Carmichael made up her mind upon the point that she and Janet Monroe had been discussing.

"I am sure he would like the rookery best of all," said Julia; "and if you only draw it as perfectly as you have drawn the reeds and the water-hens at Bevis, he will be able to hear the birds caw when he looks at it;" for the matter in hand was a drawing which Miss Monroe had offered to execute for the consolation and delight of Julia's absent lover.

"You are as flattering a critic as Sir Wilfrid," said Janet smiling, "but my vanity is kept in order by my superior knowledge."

"Which means that neither Sir Wilfrid nor I know anything about art. Well, perhaps we don't, but we know what we like, and that, in the present instance, is you and all your works. I'm sure he would have chosen the rookery if he had been here."

"Then it shall be the rookery, and I will begin it to-morrow."

"The best view of it is from John's own room," said Julia; "another reason why he will like the drawing so much. Come and see it from thence."

"With pleasure," said Janet; "I have never been in that room, I think."

"Very likely not. It was always his, but then he never stayed here, after he grew up, except in the holidays, when the girls had gone home, and the room was kept locked up with all his rubbish in it. It is not locked now, and I have tidied it up."

The room was in the gable end of the house opposite to Janet's own, on an upper floor, and the view from the ivy-framed window justified Julia's commendation. Janet contemplated the group of trees with silent and prolonged attention, which Julia imitated, but only for a few minutes. She soon found occupation in shifting the old school and college books that occupied a few shelves on the wall, and looking into them for bits of scribbling in a well-known handwriting.

Presently Janet left the window, and remarking that Julia was right, and that the trees were grand from there, she looked

about the room with some interest. It told of boyish occupation, in the vividly-coloured sporting-prints that adorned the walls, and the implements of cricket and football that were put by in a corner. A portrait of John Sandilands, aged thirteen, a frightful example of photography in its infancy, hung above the mantelpiece, and beneath it, in the centre of the slab, was a flat brass-bound mahogany box, at which Janet looked curiously.

"John's first pistol," said Julia, raising the lid and displaying the weapon, in its green cloth-lined receptacle, with a neat assortment of ammunition, and a little brass box of caps in appropriate cells on either side of it. "He taught me to fire at a mark with that, and I assure you I hit it most times. It's an old-fashioned thing, and he despised it, I suppose, too much to take it with him. Have you ever shot at a mark?"

Julia had the pistol in her hand now.

"No, never," answered Janet, looking at it rather askance; "I don't know anything about firearms, and I think I am afraid of them, even when they are not loaded."

"Nonsense," said Julia, as she popped a cap and snapped it off, pointing the pistol at the photograph of John, and then repeated the action, with a childish pleasure in the noise. "How I should like to go and shoot at our old mark," she said. "Watch, Janet, how quickly I can load this; John taught me," and she adjusted the powder and ball, drew the charge, and replaced the little weapon with quickness and nicety.

"There!" she said, closing the lid of the box; "there's a valuable accomplishment for you."

The two girls then left the room, it being settled that Janet should begin her drawing after breakfast the next day, in John's room, and that Julia should read to her while she was at work.

"I never wished so much that I could stay longer at Bury House," said Julia, as they went downstairs, "though I am always sorry to go away when the time comes. This visit has made a great difference in my life. I return the richer by two true friends—why, it is a fortune in itself!—and oh Janet, how I do wish I could ask you to Hunsford; though I ought not, for you would be wretched there. You would love my dear uncle, but Lady Rosa would scare you, you who never knew anybody more alarming than our old ladies and Mrs. Drummond."

"She was not alarming," said Janet,

gently; "she was thoroughly kind and good. I think some people did not understand her."

"Ah," said Julia, following her own thoughts, "there's no misunderstanding Lady Rosa; she makes her meaning clear to the dullest comprehension. But though you couldn't like my aunt, you will be sure to like my cousin. When Laura returns to England she means to come and see the old ladies, and I know she will like you, and you will like her, and we shall all have some happy days together."

Julia had hardly uttered these words when the remembrance of the vicinity of Bury House to Bevis crossed her mind, and suggested a doubt, but she remembered, in time to prevent any change of tone, that they knew nothing of Dunstan at Bury House.

"Why do you think Mrs. Thornton will like me?" asked Janet; "she and I must be so totally unlike in every respect. I always fancy her a bright little queen of beauty, and a perfect woman of the world, with the elegant manners, and the ready knowledge of everything and everybody that I can only imagine by the help of the few novels I have read. I should seem very ignorant and very awkward to Mrs. Thornton."

"Because you cannot talk about balls, and never were in London since you were a baby! At that rate you ought to seem ignorant and awkward beside me, and I don't think your humility carries you quite so far as that. Do you know, Janet," she went on, "you often make me think of Laura's husband; you are so quiet-minded, and have such thorough-going ways. Then there is something unworldly in you both, a manner of measuring, and considering, and estimating things quite unlike ordinary people's."

"Have I such ways?" asked Janet, surprised.

"Indeed you have; and it is not only because you do not know the sort of world we live in, it is because you yourself are of another kind; it would make no difference in you if you did know it. You would never be a woman of the world, and Robert Thornton would never be a man of the world; and I think it is the greatest pity you and he did not meet and make a match of it."

"That is kind to your cousin, at any rate," said Janet, laughing, but a little constrainedly; "and consistent, too, after all you have told me of his devotion to her."

"That's just it. I am sure your notions of love and Robert Thornton's would

exactly coincide; and that if you do fall in love, it will be just such a serious and chronic malady as it is with him."

"Have you taken the complaint so very lightly yourself?"

"Well," answered Janet, "but, do you know, I think I have. At all events, there's nothing tragic about either me or John, and we shall be the veriest Darby and Joan couple in existence. And now Joan must go and finish her letter to Darby. Will you walk to the post-office with me when I am ready?"

Janet assented, and Julia was leaving the room, when she returned to say:

"I wish you would give me a photograph of yourself to send to John."

"I would with pleasure, if I had one; but no likeness has ever been taken of me."

"What a shame!" said Julia, and ran off to finish her letter.

Half an hour later Janet and Julia were returning from their walk to the post-office. The fresh breeze sweeping the leaves along the paths, and occasionally whirling them up into the girls' faces, was also touching Janet's fair cheeks with more than their usual colour, and brightening her eyes. Julia hated wind, and walked along with her head down, to avoid it. As they came round the corner of the road on the lower side of Bury House, two gentlemen on horseback rounded the curve on the upper side, and both saw the female figures approaching the gate. Neither on the road, in the grounds of Bury House, nor in the fields on the opposite side of the road, was any other person than these four individuals, and there was no sound of any vehicle upon the road. Miss Monroe was the first to recognise the riders, and she did so with a start, but in silence. The next moment Julia exclaimed:

"Look, Janet; here comes Sir Wilfrid Esdaile," and the girls quickened their pace. They were within a stone's throw of the gate on the lower, the gentlemen were within a few hundred yards of it on the upper side, Sir Wilfrid Esdaile keeping on the grassy edge of the road, along which the leaves lay in long drifts, when his horse went down with terrific suddenness, pitching him over its head against one of the great elm trunks. There was a moment of confusion; the next, Janet, white as a statue, had bidden Julia run for the gardener, and, while Dunstan knelt beside his friend, was standing with his horse's bridle in her hand. Julia started off the instant Janet spoke, and beyond

his first exclamation of horror, Dunstan did not utter a word for a full minute, which seemed to Janet an age.

"Is he killed?" she asked at length.

"No," said Dunstan, pausing for an instant in his examination of Esdaile. "He is living, but insensible."

She led the horse to the hedge, secured the bridle, and joined Dunstan.

"Help will come in a few moments," she said. "If you can lift his head I can hold it."

She seated herself on the ground, and Dunstan laid Esdaile's head in her lap. The face was ashy, the eyes were shut; he looked awfully like death, but the breath was in him, and there was no cut about the head. A few yards from them lay Esdaile's horse, fallen forward in a horrid heap. It had made a few struggles, but now was only twitching and uttering a dreadful sound between a moan and a snort. As Janet looked at the poor animal her white face grew whiter still.

"Oh Captain Dunstan," she said, "look at Katinka. Look at her!"

He looked, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Poor brute, we must have her shot."

"Is she so hopelessly hurt?"

"Yes. Look at her shoulder—or rather, don't look. How can she have done it?"

"I know. There's a hole in the road just there, in the grass. There's the heap of stones ready for mending it. It was covered by the drifting leaves."

These few sentences were exchanged between them while Dunstan, in an agony of fear and impatience, was looking up and down the road. It was quite solitary; but in a time incredibly short in reality Julia returned, accompanied by two men carrying a door.

"That's well thought of," said Dunstan.

"Lay it down here, and we will get him on it."

"You and one of the men can do that; let the other take your horse and go to Doctor Andrews."

It was Janet who spoke, while the men, with mutterings of pity, were lifting the unconscious form.

"Do you go, Duncan," she added, addressing the gardener. "Tell him what has happened, that he may know what to bring." And now, being freed, she rose from the ground.

The man mounted and rode away, and the others lifted their burden.

"Go on, Julia, and tell them at the house. He had better be taken to the end room."

Again Julia obeyed her instantly, and

presently the unconscious burthen was carried up to Bury House, Janet walking at the side, and steadying the still figure with her strong hand.

The old ladies, dreadfully distressed, but quiet, were in the hall, and Julia had gone on to the end room—Janet's sitting-room—and made such preparation as was possible, with the assistance of a couple of frightened maids. They carried Sir Wilfrid in, and laid him on a couch, and then, almost in silence, they endeavoured to restore him to consciousness. Dunstan spoke only to ask:

"Is the doctor's house far off?"

Miss Sandilands answered him that it was a mile from Bury House.

"Heaven send he may be in," said Dunstan. "I don't know what to do. He looks a little better; don't you think so?"

They could say nothing; consternation was in every face.

Except Janet's. She was not there. When the unconscious figure had been laid upon the couch she went away unnoticed, and ran upstairs to the room which she and Julia had visited that day. Presently she reappeared among the group in the end room, and touching Julia on the arm, signed to her to come out into the hall. On a table lay the old mahogany pistol-case. Janet raised the lid, and bade Julia charge the little weapon.

"I would have done it myself," she said, "if I had been sure enough about it—if I had seen accurately enough how you did it. Be quick, Julia; be quick."

"What do you want it for?"

"The mare must be shot. There, is it done?"

"Poor thing. What a pity! I suppose Captain Dunstan will get Duncan to do it when he gets back." She had charged the pistol as she spoke, and Janet took it from her hand.

"Go back now," she said. "I will come presently."

"How dreadfully white you look, Janet. Oh, how I wish the doctor had come. What, what will he say?"

"Heaven knows. But go—go and help."

Julia left her, and the moment the door of the end room closed, Janet went swiftly out of the house, down the avenue, and to the scene of the accident. The road was not quite solitary now; a country cart, with a woman in it, was drawn up on the opposite side, and a loutish boy had got out of the vehicle, and was inspecting the injured horse, at a safe distance, with a grin upon

his countenance. Still quivering, still producing the painful sound between a moan and a snort, and stretching her neck upwards from the ground with the movement that is so distressing to witness, Katinka lay, a piteous spectacle. Janet, bidding the grinning lout begone in a tone that caused him to clamber into the cart on the instant, went up to the mare's restless craning neck; and having laid her left hand gently on the heaving nostrils, with a last caress, placed the pistol well within the sharp sleek black ear, and fired. A noise, a flash, a shout from the lout in the cart, a strong quiver through the great black heap upon the ground, then stillness; and Janet ran like a wild creature, until she was hidden on the other side of the hedge, when she threw herself upon the grass, and burst into tears.

Before the doctor arrived Esdaile had recovered consciousness, and had spoken, complaining of his shoulder and side. Dr. Andrews found that a broken rib, fracture of the collar-bone, and some bruises about the head, made up the sum of his injuries. The women waited in great suspense until Captain Dunstan brought the doctor's report to them.

"Happily," he said, in conclusion, "there is no dangerous symptom. He has borne the examination and all the rest well; but it will be impossible to move him for some time. It is very distressing that such a charge should be imposed on you, Miss Sandilands, but it is inevitable."

"It is a charge which we accept with more than willingness," said Miss Susan, in a trembling voice, but with most kindly dignity, "and count it a privilege. Sir Wilfrid shall have all the care that we can give him."

Dunstan acknowledged their kindness warmly, and, indeed, unfortunate as the occurrence was, it introduced him to the old ladies and to Julia in a very favourable light. Julia, who regarded him with curiosity and interest arising from sources of which all the others were ignorant, found no difficulty in perceiving why Laura had cared for this handsome, refined, vivacious young man, but much in comprehending how she had been bullied into giving him up.

"I must get back at once," continued Dunstan, "and bring over Esdaile's servant. He is a clever fellow, and has travelled with him; most fortunately he came down

to Bevis with the horses yesterday; he will be his best nurse for to-night, Dr. Andrews says. To-morrow we can have a nurse from London. And now I must be off at once, for it will take some time to get Saunders here, and Dr. Andrews has promised to remain in the house. It is dusk already."

He was hurrying away, but with a sudden remembrance he returned a few steps, and addressed Janet.

"Esdaile rode the black mare Katinka to-day, Miss Monroe," he said, "because he thought you would like to see her; they told us she was a favourite with you. This makes me doubly sorry for the accident, and will make him doubly sorry when he learns her fate. I shall be obliged to ask the man who went for the doctor to put the poor brute out of pain. He is the gardener, I think; he will have a gun."

Janet answered him, with quivering lips:

"There is no need. You said Katinka was hopelessly hurt, and she has been shot."

"Has been shot! When? By whom?"

"An hour ago. By me. There was no one else to do it, or to remember her. Pray forgive me, Captain Dunstan; I was very fond of her, and I could not bear her pain."

"You did right, most right," said Dunstan, very courteously; "I am only sorry you should have had so distressing a task, but I forgot all about the mare until just now."

Duncan was walking Dunstan's horse about the avenue; and Dunstan did not mount at once, but walked to the spot where the dead mare lay; when he paused for a moment, while Duncan led the other horse past the unsightly spectacle.

"Get a cart and have it taken away at once," said Dunstan, when he was in the saddle, and then he rode on at a rapid pace, full of distress and anxiety about his friend, but thinking more distinctly of Janet Monroe; the cool promptitude of her action when the accident occurred; the strange strength which made her shoot the mare; the keen suffering in her white beautiful face.

"It was an extraordinary meeting," he thought, "and effectually did away with any formalities. How quietly she took the bridle when I jumped off! I had no idea she was so handsome."